VOL. 13 NO. 4 WINTER 2024

ESOTERICA

INSIGHTS INTO THE AGELESS WISDOM

Contributors: Noeline Hart | David Pratt | Rachel Carson | Alan Senior
Margeuritte Harmon Bro | Sebastian Sek

Contents

3 **From the Editor's desk** – *Julie Cunningham*
4 **The Heart of the Matter** – *Noeline Hart*
8 ***The Mahatmas*** – *David Pratt*
11 **Wise Words...** – *Rachel Carson*
12 **Anton Mesmer** – *Theosophical Magazine*
20 **The Many Influences Behind Mendelssohn's *Hebrides* Overture** – *Alan Senior*
28 **Edgar Cayce** – *Margueritte Harmon Bro*
40 **The Secret Doctrine of Meaning: Unravelling Man's Search for Purpose Through Suffering** – *Sebastian Sek*
46 **Last Words – Constantine's Impact on Early Christianity**
47 **About The Theosophical Society**

Cover image: Aaron Burden
ISSN: 2753-5037

The journal of the
Theosophical Society in
England and Wales
50 Gloucester Place
London
W1U 8EA

Tel: 020 7563 9817
Email: office@theosoc.org.uk
www.theosoc.org.uk

Charity No. 1167737 Registered in England
Registered Company No. 09705732
Published quarterly on the solstices and equinoxes.

Membership of the Theosophical Society is £20 per individual per year or £30 for couples.

The views expressed by contributors are not necessarily those of the Theosophical Society.

© The Theosophical Society 2024

For details of advertising rates in *Esoterica* please contact: ***accounts@theosoc.org.uk***

From the Editor's desk

Welcome to the Winter edition of *Esoterica*. 2024 has been a year of violence and hatred across much of the world. We have seen so many images of wars and the destruction of cities and the suffering of innocents. Even here, in the otherwise peaceful climate of the UK we have witnessed extreme violence on our streets fuelled by racial hatred. You may well recall the terrible events that took place in Southport on the 29th of July. Three children killed followed by a wave of violence which quickly spread across the UK. Noeline Hart, President of Southport Lodge, sent us a short, heartfelt article – *The Heart of the Matter* – soon after the event, which demonstrates that where there is evil, sometimes it triggers a very positive response.

We have a bumper magazine for you to mark the ending of the year as the darkest days reach their limit and the light of the Solar Logos starts its return to gradually brighten up our days once more.

Anton Mesmer and Edgar Case, two very fascinating characters from recent history, are the subjects of excellent articles. Alan Senior's article *The Many Influences Behind Mendelssohn's 'Hebrides' Overture* tells of the Fingal's Cave in the Hebrides. The list of famous people who were drawn to visit this celebrated cave include Sir Walter Scott, Keats, Turner, Wordsworth, Queen Victoria, and Prince Albert, to name but a few.

The Mahatma Letters, many of which are housed in the British Library, have been a source of knowledge, instruction, and inspiration for theosophists since they were published over one hundred years ago. Mostly in the form of questions and answers, they cover a wealth of occult knowledge and make fascinating reading. For example, A.O. Hume's question about the mahatmas' alleged failure to leave any mark on world history. The master's reply is very revealing, to say the least.

Fingal's Cave, Staffa, Inner Hebrides

Christmas is upon us once more with its massive boost to commercialism when this year's gifts are bought with next year's money. Or we could take the view of Calvin Coolidge – that *"Christmas is not a time nor a season, but a state of mind. To cherish peace and goodwill, to be plenteous in mercy, is to have the real spirit of Christmas."*

What I would have for Christmas is peace on Earth. Best wishes to all. ✻.

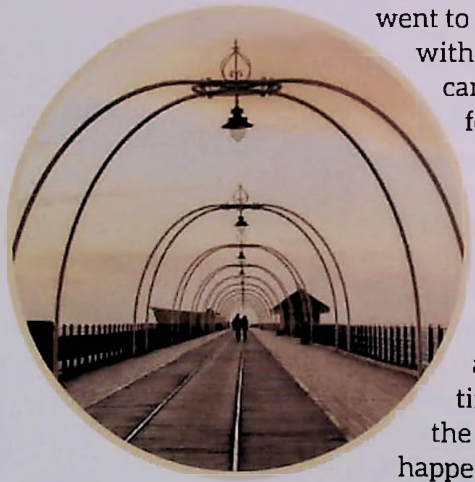
Julie Cunningham Editor

We are always pleased to receive feedback on the articles published and also welcome your own articles for our consideration. Please email us at *esoterica@theosoc.org.uk*. The deadline for inclusion in the Spring edition is 20th February 2025.

apologies were given to the Chief Imam who had been trapped with others inside the mosque for five hours during the riots, fearing for their lives. The Imam said he was both humbled and filled with gratitude as Southport people again came together to help and show unity and love.

Sadly, the tragedy became the nucleus of a shockwave that rippled throughout the country, bringing out the worst in people. We all witnessed through the media the scenes of riots and protests that escalated during that week in so many of our cities.

Now, as I write, the funerals are starting to take place and there is such an outpouring of love, grief and utter compassion for all who have been directly affected... it is overwhelming. My daughter, who teaches at the school where little Alice attended, went to the funeral yesterday with many of the staff and she came back broken-hearted for the parents who had lost their only child.



As a Theosophist, although I have experienced first hand the whole event, both physically, emotionally and mentally, I have had time to reflect and consider the greater reality that has happened from a spiritual level.

Such an outpouring of love, and simple acts of kindness to strangers has taken place, with residents of Hart Street bringing hot drinks and bacon sandwiches to the police who were on duty throughout the night at the scene of the attack; strangers sending generous donations to the owner of the corner shop that was raided during the riot, losing £10,000 of stock which was not insured. The people of Southport have experienced a unity through adversity that could not have happened through normal everyday life where we get caught up in our separate needs and concerns. The collective group mind of the community has walked the burning ground and hearts have been opened wide and flooded with compassion for others. The people are becoming one, united in their grief and pain, feeling the waves of unconditional love being expressed, with many experiencing this profound love, untainted by selfish needs, perhaps for the first time.

Our troubled world is also experiencing the same tragic events, as suffering humanity treads the burning ground which transforms the darkness of lower nature into a higher expression through the heart chakra. This transmutation is irreversible and as each human heart centre opens fully to transmit its light, the matter of this physical world becomes spiritualised.

HPB said that *"Evil can only exist when there are forms to contain it."* We are the forms and it is our dharma to transmute our matter into light through the ineffable power of love.

***Noeline Hart** is President of the Southport TSEW Lodge.*

Theosophical Society in England & Wales

Talks ✣ Courses
Articles
And much more.

Visit us at:
theosophicalsociety.org.uk

Do you have something to share from reading *Esoterica*?
Your comments and thoughts about the articles would be very welcome.

Email Julie Cunningham:
esoterica@theosoc.org.uk

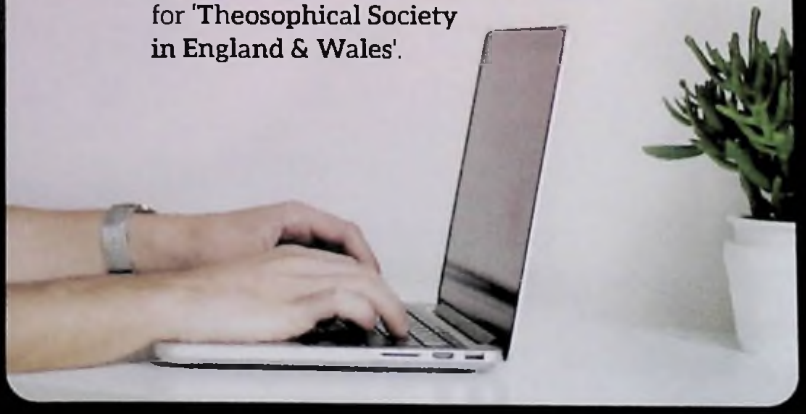
Join us on YouTube and Facebook

If for any reason you are unable to join our Sunday evening Zoom talks, then don't forget that they are uploaded to YouTube soon after, giving you the option to view them at your own leisure.

There are currently over 300 videos of past talks to choose from, and we are adding to the number constantly. If you would like to be notified each time a new video is added, then simply click the subscribe button along with the notification bell at the side of it and join the 8,500+ people from around the world who are already subscribed to it.

Why not visit now and see what's on offer. Visit ***www.youtube.com*** and search for **'Theosophical Society in England & Wales'**.

Our Facebook page is where you can keep up with current events as well as connect with other TS members from around the world. Visit ***facebook.com*** and search for **'Theosophical Society in England & Wales'**.



The Mahatmas

From www.davidpratt.info/mahatma.htm

In reply to A.O. Hume's question about the mahatmas' alleged failure to leave any mark on world history, KH writes: *'How do you know they have made no such mark? Are you acquainted with their efforts, successes, and failures? ... How could your world collect proofs of the doings of men who have sedulously kept closed every possible door of approach by which the inquisitive could spy upon them? The prime condition of their success was that they should never be surprised or obstructed. What they have done they know; all those outside their circle could perceive was the results, the causes of which were masked from view. To account for these results, many have in different ages invented theories of the interposition of "Gods," special providences, fates, and the benign or hostile influences of the stars.*

'There never was a time within or before the so-called historical period when our predecessors were not moulding events and "making history," the facts of which were subsequently and invariably distorted by "historians" to suit contemporary prejudices. Are you quite sure that the visible heroic figures in the successive dramas were not often but their puppets? We never pretended to be able to draw nations in the mass to this or that crisis in spite of the general drift of the world's cosmic relations. The cycles must run their rounds. Periods of mental and moral light and darkness succeed each other, as day does night. The major and minor yugas must be accomplished according to the established order of things. And we, borne along on the mighty tide, can only modify and direct some of its minor currents. ...

'There have been times when "a considerable portion of enlightened minds" were taught in our schools. Such times there were in India, Persia, Egypt, Greece and Rome. But ... the adept is the efflorescence of his age, and comparatively few ever appear in a single century. Earth is the battle ground of moral no less than of physical forces; and the boisterousness of animal passions under the stimulus of the rude energies of the lower group of etheric agents, always tends to quench spirituality. ...

Jessezhou Uvuz

'True also, our numbers are just now diminishing but this is because, as I have said, we are of the human race, subject to its cyclic impulses and powerless to turn that back upon itself. Can you turn the Gunga [Ganges] *or the Brahmapura back to its sources; can you even dam it so that its piled up waters will not overflow the banks? No, but you may draw the stream partly into canals and utilize its hydraulic powers for the good of mankind. So we, who can not stop the world from going in its destined direction, are yet able to divert some part of its energy into useful channels.'*
(ML2 500-1 / MLC 473-4)

'[T]*he members of the Great Brotherhood ... are continuously acting as a Guardian Wall ... around mankind, shielding and protecting it against dangers both of a cosmic and terrestrial character, of which the multitudes know less than nothing.'*
(ET 1058-9)

'What are these evils? They are simply entities and powers and influences and forces which, were they to enter our human sphere, would wreak evil upon us because they are not ... in sympathy with us, though in ... their own spheres, in their own lands, they are no more evil than we are.'
(DGDP 3:293)

'[If the mahatmas] *exerted their spiritual and intellectual and psychical powers ... merely in order to force men and women to follow paths which mankind have not themselves chosen by deliberate choice, [they] would be enacting the part of drivers of dumbly driven human cattle, with consequent spiritual-intellectual good and benefit neither to the drivers nor to the driven. ... They guide humanity spiritually and intellectually; they instil lessons of mercy and of pity... It is their sublime duty always to work to restore and preserve peace and harmony and brotherly love among men. Should such exalted individuals ever concern themselves with the political turmoils of any age, ... they do so only as peace-makers.'*
(ET 1068-9)

'[The elder brothers] *have always existed as a body, all knowing each other, no matter in what part of the world they may be, and all working for the race in many different ways. In some periods they are well known to the people and move among ordinary men whenever the social organization, the virtue, and the development of the nations permit it. For if they were to come out openly and be heard of everywhere, they would be worshipped as gods by some and hunted as devils by others. In those periods when they do come out some of their number are rulers of men, some teachers, a few great philosophers, while others remain still unknown except to the most advanced of the body.'*
(Ocean 3-4)

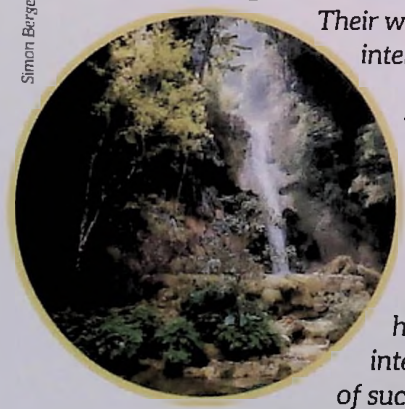
Above: Partial view of a traditional painting with images of Taoist Immortals.

'The exact extent, depth, breadth, and length of the mysteries of nature are to be found only in Eastern esoteric sciences. So vast and so

profound are these that hardly a few, a very few of the highest initiates – those whose very existence is known but to a small number of adepts – are capable of assimilating the knowledge. Yet it is all there, and one by one facts and processes in nature's workshops are permitted to find their way into the exact sciences, while mysterious help is given to rare individuals in unravelling its arcana.'
(SD 1:611-12)

Master M to A.P. Sinnett: *'There is more of this movement than you have yet had an inkling of, and the work of the T.S. is linked in with similar work that is secretly going on in all parts of the world.'*
(ML2 271 / MLC 133)

'The esoteric groups of Mystery-Schools are perhaps more numerous today than they have been for thousands of years, but they are more secretly conducted and more carefully hid. ... [E]very single national unit of the globe, has its own secret spiritual protectors, who as a body form a true esoteric center. ... These national guardians never interfere in politics. ... Their work is purely spiritual, moral, intellectual, and wholly benevolent ...


Simon Berger

'There are actually groups whose sole business is forming occult centers of initiation, preparation of students for esoteric work in the world, and for the safeguarding of priceless treasures, the heirlooms of the human race, treasures both intellectual and material. The chief of such groups lives in what theosophists call Shambhala. ... There is another branch brotherhood, affiliated with the Chief Brotherhood of Tibet in Syria, still another one in Egypt, still another one in South America. There is one in Mexico and there is one in the United States. There is likewise one in Europe. All these smaller groups are affiliates or subordinate to the mother-group of the Occult Hierarchy in Shambhala.'
(SOP 637-8)

Extract from *The Mahatmas*.
Reproduced by kind permission of David Pratt – *www.davidpratt.info/mahatma.htm*

Abbreviations

DGDP	*The Dialogues of G. de Purucker*, A.L. Conger (ed.), TUP, 2nd ed., 1997
ET	*The Esoteric Tradition*, G. de Purucker, TUP, 2nd ed., 1940
ML2	*The Mahatma Letters to A.P. Sinnett*, A. Trevor Barker (comp.), TUP, 2nd rev. ed., 2021
MLC	*The Mahatma Letters to A.P. Sinnett*, TPH, chron. ed., 1993
Ocean	*The Ocean of Theosophy*, W.Q. Judge, TUP, 1973 (1893)
SD	*The Secret Doctrine*, H.P. Blavatsky, TUP, 1977 (1888)
SOP	*Studies in Occult Philosophy*, G. de Purucker, TUP, 1945

Wise Words...

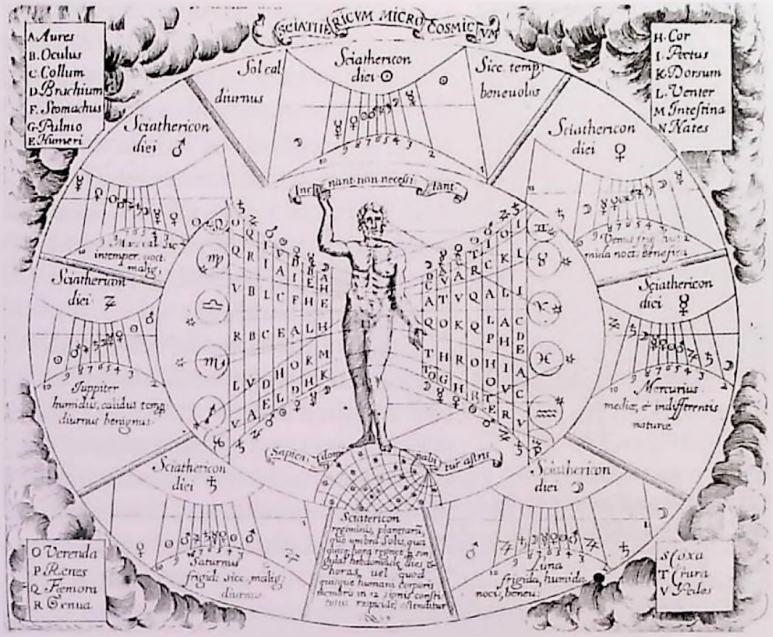
"Those who contemplate the beauty of the earth find reserves of strength that will endure as long as life lasts. There is something infinitely healing in the repeated refrains of nature – the assurance that dawn comes after night, and spring after winter."

Rachel Carson, from her book *Silent Spring*.

postulate that one Vital Principle pervades the entire universe. This Principle is the One Life of our solar system, the one Force underlying all the various forces of nature. Magnetism is one of the manifestations of this Vital Principle, and when human magnetism is directed by the will it is known as Mesmerism.

Anton Mesmer, the rediscoverer of the practical uses of this most important branch of Magic, was born in a little town on Lake Constance on May 23, 1734. At the age of nine he entered a monastery school and at fifteen won a scholarship at Dillingen. In his eighteenth year he entered the University of Ingolstadt, where he studied the writings of Paracelsus and obtained the degree of doctor of philosophy. He studied law for a while in Vienna, but his interest in Paracelsus fired him with a determination to become a doctor and he took up the study of medicine under Dr. van Swieten, one of the foremost physicians of the day.

On May 27, 1766, Mesmer received his medical degree. His thesis, based on the writings of Paracelsus, was called *The Influence of the Planets on the Human Body.* Two years later he married a widow ten years his senior, and building a beautiful house on the Landstrasse in Vienna, settled in a neighborhood which was the center of Rosicrucian activities. His home was palatial, a miniature Versailles, with gardens laid out in rococo style, surrounding a charming little theater. Dr. Mesmer was deeply fond of music, playing with skill the piano and cello. His home was soon the meeting place of the music lovers of Vienna, Haydn and Mozart



Above: Astrological chart showing the influences of the planets and constellations on the organs of the body. Dated 17th century

becoming daily visitors. When the Director of the Imperial Opera refused to present an opera by Mozart on the ground that he (then twelve years old) was too young to compose an opera, Dr. Mesmer took pity on the young artist and presented Mozart's first work to the public in his own garden theater. Mozart acknowledged this service by inserting a complimentary reference to Dr. Mesmer in his *Cosi fan Tutte.*

Dr. Mesmer divided his time between his musical friends and his philosophical and scientific study, a pleasant life in the Landstrasse which continued for six years — from 1768 to 1774. In 1774 a distinguished foreigner and his wife arrived in Vienna. The

Above: Maximilian Hell (1720 – 1792) was an astronomer and an ordained Jesuit priest from the Kingdom of Hungary.

lady was taken ill and her husband asked the famous astronomer, Dr. Maximilian Heil, to prepare a magnet for her. Hearing of the experiment, Mesmer watched the lady's improvements with interest. He decided to use magnets with his own patients. He magnetized the water they drank and bathed in, their clothing and bedding.

News of the cures he effected by these methods spread like wildfire and within a year Dr. Mesmer's name was known throughout Austria. The Bavarian Academy of Science invited him to membership and the Augsburg Academy officially reported that *"Dr. Mesmer had discovered one of nature's most mysterious motive energies."*

In 1776 an important event occurred in Dr. Mesmer's life. One day a stranger appeared at his door, introducing himself as the Count de St. Germain. *"You must be the gentleman whose anonymous letter I received yesterday,"* Dr. Mesmer remarked as he took his caller into his study. *"Yes,"* St. Germain replied, *"I am he." "You wish to speak with me on the subject of magnetism?"* Dr. Mesmer inquired. *"I do,"* St. Germain replied. *"That is why I came to Vienna."* Dr. Mesmer then told his guest of his magnetic experiments, confessing that he was still confused about the higher aspects of magnetism. *"Who can enlighten me?"* he asked. *"I can,"* said the Count, with the assurance, *"it is my duty to do so."* The conversation which took place on that memorable afternoon lasted for several hours, and, as both men were representatives of the Theosophical Movement, it probably concerned other subjects than that of magnetism alone.

The scientific standing of Dr. Mesmer is admitted by all his biographers. His occult standing is not so generally known. Dr. Mesmer was not only a Mason, but was also an initiated member of two powerful occult Fraternities, the *Fratres Lucis* and the Brotherhood of Luxor. The latter was the Egyptian branch of the Brotherhood of Lookshoor in Beluchistan, one of the oldest and most powerful of the Eastern Fraternities. Under the order of the *"Great Brotherhood"* (of which H.P.B. was a member), the Council of Luxor selected Dr. Mesmer to act as their eighteenth century pioneer, later appointing Cagliostro as a helper, with the Count de St. Germain to supervise the development of events.

From that day on, Dr. Mesmer's methods changed. Up to that time he had been using magnetized objects. Henceforth he used direct vital transmission, which he called *"animal magnetism."*

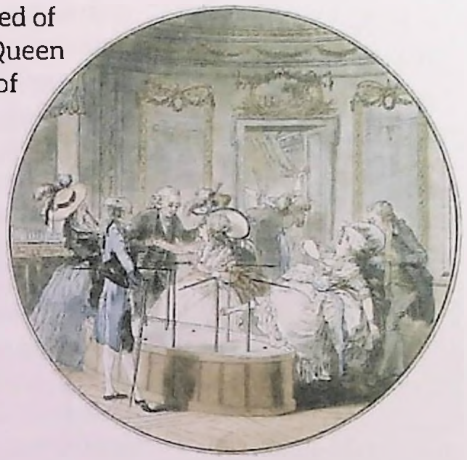
"Animal magnetism" is a fluid, a correlation of atoms on metaphysical planes, which exudes from every human being in a greater or less degree. Some people have the power to emit this fluid consciously, through their eyes and fingertips, and most of the healing "miracles" of history are based upon this psycho-physical power in man.

Following his conversation with the Count de St. Germain, Dr. Mesmer gave up his entire time to healing the sick. The house on the Landstrasse no longer echoed to the strains of Haydn and Mozart. It was now a hospital

through which a steady stream of patients flowed from morn to night. However, while Dr. Mesmer's fame grew among his patients, it decreased among his colleagues. A physician who used visible magnets was one thing; but one who made cures with an invisible *"fluid"* was quite another. After Dr. Mesmer had restored the sight of a young girl who had been blind from her babyhood, the president of the Medical Council appealed to the Empress of Austria to *"put an end to this humbug."* Denounced as an impostor, Mesmer left Vienna and went to Paris, arriving there in February, 1778.

At first the move seemed to be auspicious. Marie Antoinette promised him her patronage and many of the Austrian nobility came to him as patients. But the Academies of Science and Medicine, to whom he immediately addressed himself, refused to respect his theories. In 1779 Dr. Mesmer published his French Report on Animal Magnetism, declaring that *"it is not a secret remedy, but a scientific fact, whose causes and effects can be studied."* He frankly admitted that he wished to gain the support of some government courageous enough to give his methods a fair trial and inaugurate a *"house where the sick may be treated, and the claims I have made for animal magnetism be tested to the full."*

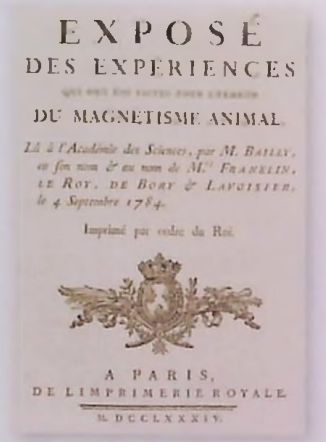
The publication of this Report caused a sensation. The Clergy attributed his astonishing cures to the Devil. The orthodox physicians denounced him as a charlatan. But the aristocracy of Paris were excited to the verge of madness by his phenomenal cures. Dr. d'Eslon, physician to the Comte d'Artois, promptly rallied to his support. A lady-in-waiting who had been cured of paralysis appealed to the Queen for her public recognition of Dr. Mesmer's methods. The Princess de Lamballe, the Duc de Bourbon, the Prince de Condé, and even the popular idol of the day, the young Marquis de Lafayette — all gave him their ardent patronage. At the Queen's request the government entered into direct communication with Dr. Mesmer in order to keep him in France, and Maurepas, one of the King's ministers, offered him a pension. From 1780 to 1784 Dr. Mesmer was the rage of Paris. He took a house in the Place Vendôme, but this was soon too small to accommodate his patients. He then made a hospital of the Hôtel Bouillon in the rue Montmartre, where he treated the poor free of charge.



Above: Artwork from 1785 of Franz Mesmer demonstrating the supposed ability of animal magnetism to cure people.

Although the Queen of France honored Dr. Mesmer with her patronage, Louis looked upon his cures with suspicion. In March, 1784, the King ordered an investigation of Mesmer's methods by a committee chosen from among the members of the Academies of Science and Medicine. Among those elected to serve on this committee were Benjamin Franklin, Bailly the astronomer, Lavoisier, the discoverer of oxygen, and the celebrated botanist, Dr. Jussieu.

At this time the French Academy was


EXPOSÉ
DES EXPERIENCES
DU MAGNETISME ANIMAL
A PARIS,
DE L'IMPRIMERIE ROYALE.

Above: The report on animal magnetism produced, amongst others, by Bailly, Franklin, Lavoisier and Jussieu.

enjoying a period of unprecedented popularity. Arrogant with success, this youthful embodiment of Science showed all the characteristics of an adolescent. How could there be merit in treatments which savants could not understand? In the report of the Committee handed to the King on August 11, 1784, the members honestly admitted the efficacy of Dr. Mesmer's cures. Some power was at work, they said, but what was the nature of that power? Could it be perceived by any of the physical senses? It could not. Therefore they concluded that *"where nothing is to be seen, felt, tasted or smelled, there nothing can exist."* Hence the amazing cures which they had witnessed must be due entirely to *"the imagination of the patients themselves."* Furthermore, these weighty minds affirmed, since:

"...the commission has found that the fluid of animal magnetism cannot be perceived by any of man's senses, the commission has come to the conclusion that there is nothing to show that the fluid of animal magnetism exists, and that, consequently, this non-existing fluid can serve no useful purpose. Therefore, to proceed with these methods in the presence of others cannot fail in the long run to be unwholesome."

Thus in 1784 Dr. Mesmer was denounced as an impostor by the French, as he had been denounced in Austria a few years before. In the following year, four of the agents of the Theosophical Movement met in the Masonic convention which took place in Paris. Dr. Mesmer had already failed to obtain recognition for his mission. In 1785 Cagliostro saw the beginning of his downfall. But there were still some hopeful signs in England. Wilkins had just published the first English translation of the *Bhagavad-Gita*. Thomas Paine was preparing to go to England with some of his inventions. The eyes of the Marquis de St. Martin and the Count de St. Germain were also focused upon English shores.

The storm which broke over Mesmer's head in 1784 was soon forgotten in the mightier tempest which engulfed the whole of France in 1791. At the beginning of the Revolution he found himself alone in Paris, his fame and fortune gone, his friends concerned with keeping their own heads from the guillotine. Not a French citizen and having no interest himself in politics, Mesmer left Paris and went to Frauenfeld, a little village about twenty miles from Zurich. There he continued his research work and gave free treatments to his humble peasant neighbors who had never even heard of the famous Dr. Mesmer. He never spoke to them of his past glory, never complained about his reversals of fortune, but steadily maintained that attitude of patience and resignation which is a common characteristic of all agents of the Theosophical Movement.

In 1803 Dr. Mesmer was invited to return to Paris, and in 1812 letters from Germany assured him that the King of Prussia, the German Academy and the German people were prepared to give the honor which France had denied him. Both of these invitations were refused. All that he wanted was a place where he could carry on his work

and make it permanently useful to those who would follow him. He went to Meersburg, a little village near the place where he was born, and in spite of his eighty years he continued to work among the poor. A pleasant respite from his labors was the weekly concert at the home of his friend Prince Dalberg, which he never missed.

On the morning of March 15, 1815, a young musician of his acquaintance came to call upon him. Dr. Mesmer showed his young friend the set of musical glasses which always accompanied him on his travels and which were copies of the musical glasses made by Athanasius Kircher in the sixteenth century, by which Kircher tried to cure diseases with the power of sound. Dr. Mesmer stroked his glasses with loving fingers. *"Mozart and Haydn often played on them when they came to see me in the Landstrasse!"* he murmured. *"Mozart was so impressed with them that he composed a special quintet for them!"* He led his young friend to the piano. *"Play something for me, my son! I am very weary!"*

Softly the opening theme of Mozart's A major Sonata tinkled from the keys. The old man's eyes closed, his hands relaxed, and on the gentle stream of soft-flowing music the great soul of Anton Mesmer went to its own place.

Mesmer's great work was denounced during his life, but after his death his doctrines continued to spread through the efforts of Lavater, Puysegur and Deluze. In 1820 the German Government and the Royal Society of Paris offered a prize of 300 ducats for the best treatise on mesmerism. Between 1830 and 1846 it again came to public notice through the experiments of the Baron du Potet, who later became an Honorary Member of the Theosophical Society, and who was described by H.P.B. as *"the greatest Adept of Mesmerism in this century."* But although Science denounced Mesmerism, it plunged headlong into Hypnotism, which differs from Mesmerism as black differs from white.

Above: Jules Denis, Baron du Potet (1796 – 1881) was a French esotericist. He became a renowned practitioner of mesmerism.

In Hypnotism the operator paralyzes that channel in the brain through which the subject, as Ego, operates and controls that organ. This action prevents the subject from receiving any other impressions than those suggested by the operator. This practice has always been named Black Magic by the true adepts because it is an interference with the free-will of the Ego. Any person, therefore, who practices hypnotism is well on the road to becoming a Black Magician. Hypnotism acts upon the capillary veins and nerves from without, as a repression. But in Mesmerism the case is reversed. Here the effect is produced from within without — an opening up instead of a repression and contraction. In Mesmerism the operator does not interfere with the free-will of his patient, and the subject continues to move in accordance with his own nature and qualities.

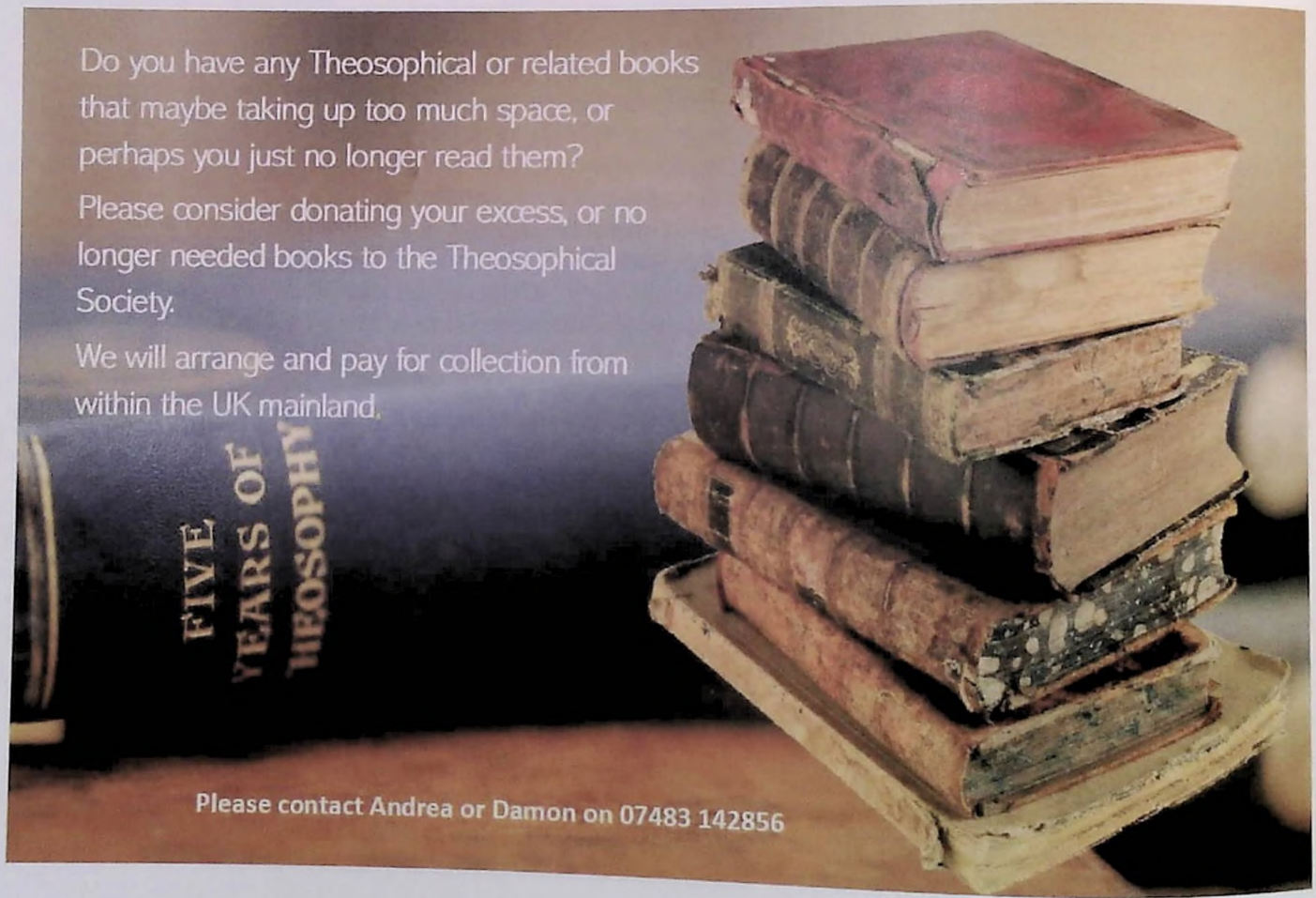
The present experiments in Hypnotism, which are becoming more prevalent every day, are the most dangerous of practices. The

action and reaction of ideas on the lower inner Ego are not yet understood for the simple reason that the Ego itself is still terra incognita. When physicians begin to study the complex nature of man and discover the occult axiom that the will of man must not be controlled by another, they will not only have begun the study of Magic but will have taken the first step toward Adeptship.

For, as a Teacher has said,

"The degrees of an Adept's initiation mark the seven stages at which he discovers the secret of the sevenfold principles in nature and man and awakens his dormant power." ✣

Article by Anon – *Theosophical Magazine*, August 1938


Do you have any Theosophical or related books that maybe taking up too much space, or perhaps you just no longer read them?
Please consider donating your excess, or no longer needed books to the Theosophical Society.
We will arrange and pay for collection from within the UK mainland.
FIVE YEARS OF THEOSOPHY
Please contact Andrea or Damon on 07483 142856

12th World Congress

THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

23 - 27 July

2025

Toward Insight and Wholeness:

150 YEARS
Theosophical Society
Founded in 1875

OUR ROLE IN SHAPING THE FUTURE

100 YEARS
Theosophical Society
in Canada

The Many Influences Behind Mendelssohn's *Hebrides* Overture

By ***Alan Senior***

Through the tones and harmonies of this Mendelssohn concert overture we are led beyond the shores of west Scotland, and also west of the Isle of Mull to a small but significant island off Loch na Keal, some distance north of the sacred island of Iona and called Staffa (from the Old Norse Stave or Pillar Island as its basalt columns reminded the Norsemen of their tree-log houses in Scandinavia). Here we follow a route of travel which, during the course of human evolution, has been thought to convey many occult secrets. From entirely different parts of the western hemisphere, as if through a karmic current of migration, various peoples were once located in this region to which those orchestral tones seem to have led us; thus many strange destinies are made known to us. We are told, by what occultism relates and what traditional sources can convey, what these peoples experienced in ancient times in this particular part of the world.

Memory of the mysterious destinies of these people arose again, as if newly awakened, when in about 1772 the celebrated cave on this Island, part of the Hebrides, was rediscovered for many people, including Sir Joseph Banks, President of the Royal Society, who was the first to name it Fingal's Cave,

having read about the famous warrior Fingal (fionn na ghal – *'chief of valour'*) in the newly discovered poems of the early Celtic poet Ossian. So it was that other famous people followed him to the island, such as Sir Walter Scott, Keats, Turner, Wordsworth, Queen Victoria and Prince Albert, Robert Louis Stevenson – and composer Felix Mendelssohn who sailed from Tobermory on Mull in 1829, and after a bout of seasickness from the treacherous tidal rip between the island and Mull, with memories of some words of Ossian perhaps ringing in his ears, he beheld this great cave before him, where he proceeded to expand on the B minor theme that opens the overture, the work which he also finally called *Fingal's Cave.*

Those who have beheld this 65-foot-high cave on Staffa have frequently been reminded of mysterious ancient destinies when they see how Nature herself seems to have constructed something which may be likened to a wonderful cathedral. It is formed with great symmetry in long lines of dozens of these octagonal, purple and brown basalt pillars washed daily by the waves which ceaselessly beat and often resound like thunder on to this mighty edifice. Meanwhile, inside the cave the water drips steadily from strange stone formations, making magical music which led to the name Melodious Cave by Gaelic speakers. Amongst those 18th-century discoverers, some had an intense feeling of the truly mysterious things which once took place in this region and they may also have been reminded of the hero Fingal who guided destiny here in some way, and whose fame was sung by his son Ossian, who was like a western Homer, if only a blind singer and poet, though what caused his blindness we are not told.

If we could look back and see how deeply these people were impressed by what they discerned about this place, we would be able to understand how it was that a certain Inverness poet James Macpherson sought to revive some ancient Gaelic verses, which he completed in 1763 and published soon afterwards. They made a mighty impression upon 18th-century Europe, if mostly written by himself, which he vigorously denied whilst insisting that he alone had discovered them. But if not he would certainly have drawn on many traditional Gaelic sources to produce these inspiring texts, if not by the early Ossian then by a variety of later poets. They received a great response in the 1780s, especially in continental Europe where they were translated into European languages and it also led to some fine works in the visual arts and consequently to the Celtic Revival. There is nothing which may be compared with the

Above: Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847), was a German composer, pianist, organist and conductor of the early Romantic period.

Above: James Macpherson (1736-1796) was a Scottish writer, poet, literary collector, and politician. He is known for the Ossian cycle of epic poems, which he claimed to have discovered and translated from Gaelic.

feeling made by those words which are full of passion for the glories of the past. Goethe, Herder, Napoleon harkened to them – and all believed they could detect something of the magic of those early days. Here we must understand that a spiritual world arose within their hearts, and they felt drawn to what sounded forth out of the songs! Try to imagine the blind Ossian singing and accompanying himself on the harp. What was it that thus sounded forth? We must turn to those times which fall with the first impulses of Christianity and the centuries which followed. What really happened there in the vicinity of the Hebrides and in ancient Erin, including all the neighbouring islands between Ireland and Scotland, as well as that northern part of Scotland itself? Here we should seek for the core of those peoples of Celtic origin, who had inherited what Rudolf Steiner called *'ancient Atlantean clairvoyance in its full purity'*. According to him these Western peoples had preserved for themselves the possibility of experiencing that ancient clairvoyance, nowadays entirely immersed in the personality and individuality. And they were led to this particular part of the earth, as if on a special mission, where a structure confronted them which mirrored, they felt, their own music's inner depths and was itself architecturally formed entirely out of the spiritual world, a formation which can always be recognized with those two words – Fingal's Cave. We shall imagine these events rightly if we realize that the cave acted as a focal point, echoing what lived in the souls of these people who, through their karma, were sent hither to this temple erected by the gods themselves, or so they thought. Here those people were prepared, and would later receive the Christ Impulse with their full human being, whilst located here to undergo something wonderful by way of preparation.

Again we shall be able to imagine all this if we realize that here the tribes were divided into smaller groups based upon family. Those who were related by blood felt themselves closely connected, while all others were looked upon as strangers belonging to another Group Ego. All that the Druid priests were able to give to these people poured itself out over the individual groups as a harmonizing influence. And what they were able to give lived on in the bards. We shall only rightly understand what worked through these bards, however, if we make clear to ourselves that here the most elemental passions met with the ancient powers of sight into the spiritual world, and that those who, with powerful life forces, sometimes with rage and passion, fought as representatives of their clan against other clans, perceiving the same impulses working out of the spiritual world which directed them in battle. By the way, before we proceed, are we not reminded of another great conflict fought on the plain of Kurukshetra, a sacred place of pilgrimage in India, where thousands of years ago, sometime between the 5th and 2nd centuries BC, neighbouring kins were drawn into a quarrel and war was inevitable, the battle lasting for 18 days? Here, just before the

armies engaged, Krishna and Arjuna had their famous conversation recorded in the Bhagavad-Gita, the Song of God, resulting in teaching as in the Upanishads, with Krishna seen in his aspect as the manifest Brahman, the ultimate Reality, and Arjuna, prince of India, being taught the nature of the Atman, the real Self, and how it is drawn to spirituality through Atma-Prakash, the light of the Self.

Such an active relationship between the physical and the soul realms cannot be conceived of today. When a hero raised his sword he believed that a spirit guided it, as with Arjuna's bow called Gandiva, with its spiritual qualities, allowing him to transcend individual limitations... a harmonious working together of bow, body and spirit, a special skill to concentrate mind and eye and which allowed him, like all these Celtic heroes, to behold those ancestors who had fought upon a similar battlefield in former times. In their ranks the combatants felt their ancestors actively aiding them – and they did not only feel them ... they heard them clairaudiently! It was a wonderful conception which lived in these people, that the heroes had to fight upon the battlefields and to shed their blood, but that after death they would ascend into the spiritual world, and their spirits then vibrated as tone, sounding through the air as spiritual reality.

Those who had proven themselves in battle, but had trained themselves at the same time so that they could listen to what sounded out of the winds as the voice of the past – these were highly honoured! And one of these was Ossian. When the heroes swung their swords, they were conscious that their deeds would resound further into the spiritual world and that bards would appear who would preserve all this in their songs. This was perceived as a living reality by them.

But it gives us an altogether different conception of humanity. It creates the idea that the human being is united with spiritual powers which sound forth out of the whole of Nature. For they could not look upon a storm or a flash of lightning, nor hear the thunder or the surging of the sea without sensing that out of all the activities of Nature, spirits work who are connected with the souls of the past, with the souls of their ancestors. Thus the activity of Nature was at that time seen as something altogether different than for us today. And it is for this reason that the rhythms and sounds of Ossian's verses and songs are so important, which, after being handed down for centuries through tradition, were revived by James Macpherson, the man whose writings were so derided then and by today's scholars. Yet Ossian in Macpherson's work creates for us again a consciousness of the connection of the human being with the souls of his ancestors and with the phenomena of Nature, which became a main influence in the early Romantic movement.

We can understand how Ossian conveyed that unique feeling when he described how a line of battle stormed into the field, sweeping darkness before it, as did the spirits who took part in the battle. The songs are in reality something which was able to make a great, lasting impression upon 18th-century Europe, winning wide acclaim, though mixing Ulster legends with Caledonian traditions. The whole

character of the descriptions, even though given in a rather free poetical form, awake in us a feeling for the kind of perception which lived in these peoples. There was active in them a living knowledge, a living wisdom, concerning their connection with the spiritual world and the world of Nature in which the spiritual world works.

Out of such wisdom the finest sons from the different tribes – that is, those who had the strongest connection with the spirits of the past, who more than others allowed these spirits of the past to live in their deeds – were chosen as a picked band of warriors. And those who had the strongest clairvoyant forces were placed at its head. This band had to defend the essence of the Celtic peoples against those of the surrounding world. And the most famous of these leaders was the hero who has come down to us under the name of Fingal, who has always existed in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland, alongside his son Ossian. Now Fingal was active in the defence of the ancient gods and against those who wished to endanger them, and all this was handed down in the ancient songs of Ossian, so that it remained alive even into the later centuries. What Fingal achieved, what his son Ossian heard when Fingal had ascended into the spiritual realm, and what their descendants heard in the rhythms and sounds of Ossian's songs with which they ever and again ensouled their deeds, this it was which worked so mightily even in later centuries. And we shall gain a conception of this if we realize how Ossian allowed the voice of his father, Fingal, to sound forth in his verses.

FINGAL,
AN
ANCIENT EPIC POEM,
In SIX BOOKS:
OSSIAN
By JAMES MACPHERSON,
LONDON:

We are told how the heroes found themselves in a difficult position as it was often a time of great peril for Fingal here in Fir Nan Og, the ancient Celtic land of the Ever Young... with tribe against tribe, though sometimes there were tribal confederacies. They were almost overthrown ... but then new life filled the band: *"The king stood by the stone of Lubar. Thrice he sounded forth his terrible voice. The deer started from the fountains of Cromia. The rocks shook on all their hills, with the noise of a hundred mountain streams that burst and roared and foamed... like the clouds that gather to a tempest on the blue face of the sky! So met the sons round the terrible voice of Fingal. Often had he led them to battle, returning with the spoils of the foe. Come to battle,"* said the great warrior, *"ye children of echoing Selma! Come to the death of thousands. Comhal's son will see the fight. My sword shall wave on the hill, the defence of my people in war."*

Fingal, like a beam from heaven, shone in the midst of his people, with his heroes gathered around him. Because their feelings, enthusiasm and passions were so strong and without restraint, their language and conversations became almost poetical and given to exaggeration, with imagination in

full flow but always presenting for us the sheer beauties of nature. Fingal sent forth the voice of his power: *"Raise my standards on high, spread them on Lena's wind, like the flames of a hundred hills! Let them sound on the winds of Erin, and remind us of the fight."* Thus Fingal stormed into battle, as described by his son Ossian for the bards to record such heroic actions and sing the praises of their hero, whilst never forgetting his well-known moderation, humanity, generosity and clemency, whilst Ossian himself in his verses often displays tender melancholy amidst a life where hunting and warfare were the chief occupations even after death, and valour and bodily strength the most admired qualities.

But it was not all about killing. When battle was terminated, usually by personal single combat, *"the bards sang the song of peace as fighting ceased along the field."* Religion is never mentioned. Although druidical superstitions were almost extinguished at this time, the Christian faith was not yet established, the present great clans not yet formed or known, but some of Ossian's compositions are addressed to one of the first Christian missionaries. Every recorded event was dealt with seriously but the wild scenery is never left out, nor was the tenderness expressed by lovers or consolation and *'the joy of grief.' "Strike the harp in my hall,"* said the great Fingal after a momentous victory; *"strike the harp... and let Fingal hear the song. Pleasant is the joy of grief! It is like the shower of spring, when it softens the branch of the oak; and the young leaf lifts its green head. Sing on, O bards! Tomorrow we lift the sail."* And Fingal was not only unconquerable in war but had the ability to make people happy by his principles of virtue. Meanwhile, in subjects of grace and delicacy, we see in Ossian the hand of a master. *"She came in all her beauty; like the moon from the cloud of the east. Loveliness was around her as light. Her steps were like the music of songs. She saw the youth and loved him. He was the stolen sigh of her soul. Her blue eyes rolled on him in secret; and she blest the chief of Morven."*

Above: The Dream of Ossian by Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres, 1813

No wonder that this life, this consciousness of a connection with the spiritual world which sank deep into the souls of these ancient Celts, was the best preparation whereby they could spread the divine element throughout the West in their own way and from their own soil. For what they had experienced in the form of passion and desire, what they had heard sounding forth in the melodies of the spiritual world, prepared them for a later time when they brought into the world sons who revealed these passions in their souls but in a purified and milder form. And thus we may say – it seems to us as if Erin's finest sons were to hear again the voices of their ancient bards singing of what they once heard from the

spiritual world as the deeds of their forefathers, but as if in these sons the ancient battle cries had now been formed and clarified, and had become words which could express the greatest impulse of mankind...

Above: Staffa, Fingal's Cave by J.M.W. Turner. 1832.

The scenes of Ossian's poems are always set in Scotland or on the coast of Ireland opposite Fingal's territories. All this sounded forth out of these olden times in the songs about the deeds of those who fought for many things in mighty battles in order to prepare themselves for further deeds of spiritual life in later times, as we recognize them again today in that which the finest sons of the West have achieved. These were the impulses which flowed into the souls of human beings in the 18th Century when these ancient songs were revived.

And it is this which was remembered by those who saw the wonderful cathedral built by Nature herself, and which caused them to say to themselves: "*Here is a site, a gathering place given to man, in order that what the bards were able to sing about the deeds of their ancestors, about all that the heroes did to gather their forces, might sound back to them as in an echo out of this temple which they themselves did not have to build – a holy temple which was prepared for them by the spirits of Nature and which could be an instrument of inspiration for all who beheld it.*"

So the tones and harmonies of this concert overture, or tone poem, surely inspired by Ossian's impassioned poems, caused Felix Mendelssohn to truly assimilate the experience gained from the rolling, roaring waves, the cries of the sea birds and the echoes within the vast cave, all depicted in the music and ingrained in his memory, offering an opportunity which allows us, too, to sense in our own way at least, something of the deep and mysterious events which have reigned in the history of mankind, events which occurred long before our present era on almost the same soil and seas upon which many now continue to live... as we must deepen ourselves in all that lives within us, and see that it provides us with an insight into what was there in the past. So this feeling, this sense, for what once was and now works further in mankind, is of great significance for our hidden life. ✣

The Theosophical Order of Service

Are you interested in putting theosophy into action?

Do you care about:

- **Peace?**
- **Justice?**
- **The Welfare of people and animals?**
- **The environment?**
- **Healing?**

The Theosophical Order of Service is active in many countries throughout the world.

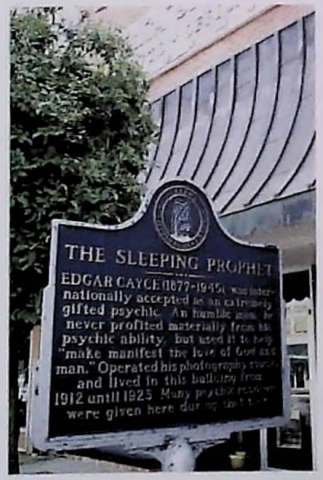
The TOS invites you to join its members who are working to make a difference.

Contact *Cynthia* and *Atma* at isart.amta@gmail.com

Edgar Cayce

By ***Margueritte Harmon Bro***

Edgar Cayce (1877-1945) was an American psychic and author. He has been called the "*sleeping prophet*" and the "*father of holistic medicine*," and is the most-documented psychic of the 20th century. By the time of his death he had amassed a record of more than 14,300 clairvoyant readings for people across the nation, with many of the sessions captured by his secretary of twenty-two years, Gladys Davis.



Above: Historical marker in front of the Selma building that housed Cayce's studio, where he lived and worked from 1912 to 1923.

He left 9,000 medical diagnoses to the Association for Research and Enlightenment (A.R.E.), a non-profit organization still active in Virginia Beach, Virginia, which he founded in 1931. In the 1920s, Cayce's trance readings expanded beyond medicine to include "*life readings*", in which he explored a person's inner conflicts and needs. He employed references to astrology, karma, reincarnation, and number symbolism. He also expounded on global prophecies, climate or geological changes, and the lost history of mythical cultures, such as Atlantis and Lemuria. He had no recollection of any of this when he awoke from his sessions. He was a devout Christian and it was therefore

Above: Edgar Cayce (1877-1945) was an American psychic and author.

hard for him to read the transcripts. Cayce was a member of the American Theosophical Society for about two years.

Early Life

Edgar Cayce was born on March 18, 1877, near Beverly, south of Hopkinsville, Kentucky to the farmers Leslie Burr Cayce and Carrie Elizabeth (née Majo), one of six children. As a child he often played with his imaginary friends (*"play folk"*) or communicated with his deceased grandfather. His father also realized one day that Edgar Cayce had the ability to memorize the content of a book simply by sleeping on it but found it hard to focus in school. He felt closest to his mother and a deep love for her because she never laughed at him and he felt comfortable sharing his thoughts with her.

When he was young, he got quite attached to the Bible and resolved to read it once for every year of his life. He also worked as the sexton at the church. In May 1889, while reading the Bible in his hut in the woods near a creek, he saw a woman with wings who told him that his prayers were answered and asked him what he wanted most of all. Even though he was frightened, he said that he wanted to help others, especially sick children. One day he got injured at the spine in school and told his parents exactly what he needed overnight to be healed and it worked.

He attended school until he was 16 years of age and then started to work for his uncle in the fields. He felt as an outsider when he was young, and many people thought he was crazy. One night he had a foretelling dream about his future wife. When his family moved to town he first stayed behind and continued working the fields until he got another message from the woman with the wings telling him to follow his family because his mother missed and needed him. He followed the advice and started to work at the Hopper's bookstore. Shortly after that he was introduced to his future wife, Gertrude Evans.

Career as a Psychic

At the age of twenty-one, Cayce developed a paralysis of the throat muscles, which caused him to lose his voice. Doctors could not find a physical cause or a remedy. One night he went to the performance of a hypnotist and when he was hypnotized that evening, he was able to speak but when he returned from the trance, the paralysis returned. After this occurrence, he turned to Al Layne, a Hopkinsville hypnotist and osteopath. When Layne hypnotized him, Cayce detailed in the entranced state a circulation problem in his throat area and recommended specific medication and manipulative therapy, which eventually aided in restoring his voice completely.

When Layne realized the potential of Cayce's ability he suggested that Cayce try the same hypnotic method to help others and suggestions in the first health reading for Layne helped heal his decade-long stomach problems. After that doctors in the area took notice of Cayce and began testing him by having the entranced Cayce diagnose their own patients. They realized that he needed only name and address of the patient to tune in *"telepathically"* to the individual's mind and body and were impressed with the effectiveness of his recommendations. After an article on October 9th, 1910 in the *New York Times*, people from all over the country sought out the *"Sleeping prophet"*, as he was to become known.

Cayce established a routine to enter into his entranced state, first loosening his tie and collar, then untying his shoes, after that reclining on his back on his couch and folding his hands on his solar plexus. After a few moments of deep breathing his eyelids would flutter and his breathing would become deep and rhythmical which was the signal for the conductor of the session to contact the subconscious.

Above: A young Edgar and his wife, Gertrude Evans.

All individuals who had a reading were identified with a number to keep their names private. Cayce gave health readings to literally thousands of individuals from famous people to ordinary citizens, even including President Woodrow Wilson.

When Edgar Cayce died on January 3, 1945, in Virginia Beach, he left 14,306 documented stenographic records of the telepathic-clairvoyant readings he had given for more than 6,000 different people over a period of forty-three years. These readings consist of 49,135 typewritten pages and constitute one of the largest and most impressive records of psychic perception ever compiled.

Edgar and Gertrude Cayce

Edgar Cayce met his wife, Gertrude Evans (born February 22, 1880) when she was only 15 years old. After the first meetings they went together to many social gatherings and Cayce started to reveal more about himself to her and her liberal family over time. He proposed to her on March 1897 and Gertrude accepted it even though she had some problems with his unusual abilities. After losing his job at the bookstore, he had several different jobs, including one in a photo studio. Soon afterwards he started to work as a photographer. During that time, he only reluctantly gave readings. A newspaper article describing his abilities in the Hopkinsville Kentuckian brought the kind of notoriety he and Gertrude disliked. Gertrude in particularly viewed is as an intrusion into their personal life and dreamed of a conventional lifestyle.

Being successful as a photographer and able to save up money, the wedding took place on June 17, 1903. Soon after their marriage his wife realized that Edgar valued helping people with his readings. Gertrude was deeply concerned for their marriage since Edgar Cayce was gentle and sensitive but when in trance, he used a completely different voice,

which appeared distant to her and she understood that these readings would keep them from having a normal life.

Edgar Cayce and his Sons

Their first child, their son Hugh Lynn, was born on March 16, 1907. Their second son, Milton Porter, was born on March 28, 1911 but he got ill. When Cayce finally did a reading for Milton it was too late, and the baby died. They had relied on the doctors and it did not occur to Cayce to turn to a reading for help at first. Soon after Gertrude got very ill with tuberculosis and the doctors said she would not survive. Cayce did several readings for her and she was treated according to the advice given in the readings which seemed to help but it was slow, uphill work. In the end Gertrude realized that the readings had saved her, and Gertrude remained steadfastly at his side all her life despite of many difficulties they had to endure and helped him with his work. In 1914, when the family lived in Selma, Alabama, their son Hugh Lynn injured his eyes and while the doctors were sure he would be blind they were willing to follow the treatment suggested in Cayce's reading and after 15 days he could see. During that time, he only gave a few readings, mainly for friends, worked and (as in most cities he lived in), taught Sunday school. Their last son, Edgar Evans Cayce was born on February 9, 1918.

Cayce's dream was to build a hospital where the treatments suggested in the readings could be done because often doctors refused to perform them. When he tried raising the money through finding oil in Texas the readings indicated that no oil would be found unless everybody involved wanted it to be used for helping. Since this was not the case the endeavor was not successful. This and other experiences changed him. He expected less of his fellow men and more of himself. In 1919 he hired the stenographer Gladys Davis. That year he also met Arthur Lammers who wanted to have some philosophical, esoteric and other questions answered with the readings. This is when he first was exposed to the concept of reincarnation which unsettled him. At that time, he also realized that when his readings were for a good purpose, he would wake up refreshed, but when people took readings that shouldn't have been taken without his knowledge he began to feel badly after each reading. Arthur Lammers convinced Cayce to move with his family and stenographer to Dayton and promised them financial support. At that time Cayce started with the *"life readings"*. But then Lammers was involved in law suits and all his money was tied up. The only thing he was able to do was to help Cayce's son to get a good education.

Above: Cayce and his sons, Hugh Lynn and Edgar Evans.

Above: Gladys Davis, Cayce's stenographer, who worked for him for 22 years.

Construction of the Virginia Beach Hospital

However, Cayce was grateful to Lammers because in his readings he found why he had psychic abilities. He had once attained a great height in soul development, only to slip downward through a series of lives until he

had reached an almost opposite position of instability. The present life was a chance to atone for some of these mistakes. In another life he was badly wounded and for days in horrible agony. He used his mind as a weapon against the pain and succeeded in elevating his mind beyond reach of his body and its suffering. Since no achievement, good or bad, is lost this ability became part of his individuality.

Several readings indicated to move to Virginia Beach and create an organization there but emphasized the importance of the proper spirit of the people involved.

Cayce followed the advice of the readings and the family moved to Virginia Beach in 1925. Initially, things went well but then a period began, when nothing appeared to work out. Cayce had been finally able to realize two lifelong dreams with the help of Morton Blumenthal, a New York stockbroker, whom he had helped market-wise. The Cayce Hospital opened in February 1929 and it had room for 30 hospital beds, treatment rooms, offices with a vault to house the readings, a library, and a lecture hall. The hospital, headed by an MD, Thomas B. House, a remote relative, was to treat patients from the readings. The Atlantic University chartered by the Commonwealth of Virginia on April 29, 1930, was to stress research into parapsychology and the occult, while providing a general education and a Bachelor of Arts degree. However, the collapsing stock market, which Cayce had ticked off for 1929, broke Blumenthal, who had inexplicably ignored Cayce's advice. Without Blumenthal's financial backing, the hospital was closed, and the college never really started. Soon after Cayce also lost his house.

Above: The original hospital building, circa 1929.

While many people believe that Cayce's income came from the readings, the truth is that Edgar Cayce was a professional photographer for the majority of his adult life. He won several national awards for his photographic work and never charged for a reading. His hobbies reflected the things he most loved in life. He was an avid gardener, loved to fish with family members, and enjoyed carpentry. He also taught Sunday school throughout his life.

Involvement with Theosophical Society

Edgar Cayce was a member of the American Theosophical Society for about two years. He was admitted to membership in the Birmingham, Alabama Lodge on December 6, 1922, sponsored by Mrs. Gladys Dillman and Mrs. Lucy Coonley.

In chapter 15 of the book *There is a River*, the author Thomas Sugrue recounts Cayce's metaphysical explorations with an Ohio printer and avid seeker in Theosophy, ancient religions, and the occult named Arthur Lammers. His cooperation with Lammers starting in the fall of 1923 in Alabama marked

a turn in Cayce's career from medical clairvoyant to esoteric philosopher. Lammers, who was familiar with Theosophical Society founder Madame Blavatsky's work wanted Cayce to delve into questions about life after death, astrology, the existence of a soul and the purpose of our lives. In one of his readings for Lammers, he provided Lammers with a whole philosophy of life, dealing with karmic rebirth:

"In this we see the plan of development of those individuals set upon this plane, meaning the ability to enter again into the presence of the Creator and become a full part of the creation.

Insofar as this entity is concerned, this is the third appearance on this plane, and before this one, as the monk. We see glimpses in the life of the entity now as were shown in the monk, in his mode of living. The body is only the vehicle ever of that spirit and soul that waft through all times and ever remain the same."

Theosophists and spiritualists were always fascinated by Cayce, and the Theosophical Press and Theosophical Publishing House distributed many books about his prophecies. *The Union Index of Theosophical Periodicals* lists 21 articles about Cayce, and the psychic was mentioned in numerous other articles. Joseph Millard's book *Mystery Man of Miracles* was very influential to Dr. Shafica Karagulla, who worked with Theosophical Society in America president Dora van Gelder Kunz, as they studied clairvoyant healing.

Over the years, numerous lodge programs of the Theosophical Society in America have centered on books about Cayce's life and teachings. His son, Hugh Lynn Cayce, represented the A.R.E. in lectures at Theosophical Society lodges. For example, he spoke at the Washington, D.C. Lodge in June, 1951; Herakles Lodge in Chicago in 1956; Washington again in 1957; St. Louis in 1958; Orlando in 1964; Ft. Wayne in 1970. Another son, Charles Thomas Cayce, gave a seminar, *Unlocking the Mysteries in Your Dreams*, in Minneapolis in 1983. The Miami, Florida Lodge offered a set of three lectures and four classes under the supervision of A.R.E. members in 1953.

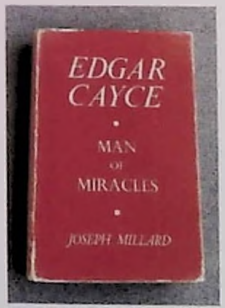
Above: Edgar Cayce at his desk.

The TSA also shared lecturers with Cayce's organization. The A.R.E. invited Dora van Gelder Kunz to conduct a workshop in Virginia Beach on July 16-29, 1986. Several Theosophists wrote important books about Edgar Cayce, including Gina Cerminara, Mitch Horowitz, and K. Paul Johnson. The pocket book *Mind as a Builder* by Mitch Horowitz is the text to a lecture by the author, exploring the principle of *Mind as Builder*, a core theme from the Edgar Cayce readings and can be found online.

Pioneering Work

Cayce was a significant pioneer in many disciplines that have gained widespread acceptance since his death:

- The value of dreams as a tool for self-understanding and guidance. He saw dreams as a safe and reliable work to explore one's own soul.



Above: An early edition of Joseph Millard's book on Edgar Cayce, *Man of Miracles*.

- The importance of meditation as a spiritual discipline. He evolved an approach that was easy to apply to the Judeo-Christian world.
- A perspective on reincarnation, karma, and grace that is potentially acceptable to the Judeo-Christian world. He presents reincarnation as an inescapable reality of how the universe operates. Karma can be softened by the influences of grace available to all souls.
- An approach to astrology that recognizes past lives and the influence of the planets, especially with regard to helping people find a sense of purpose in life. He used the influence of the planets as a way of describing innate temperament and its impact upon the personality and aptitude.

It is thought and feeling which guides the universe, not deeds.

Edgar Cayce

According to Cayce's reading we live in an orderly universe that is governed by universal laws. Humanity has a purposeful place in this universe, and there is a plan for us as souls: to bring the qualities of spiritual life into the material world consciously. That plan requires that we make proper use of two great gifts that God has given each of us: a creative mind and a free will.

Edgar Cayce emphasized in his readings the importance of staying healthy with careful, consistent application of certain fundamental principles, among them the need for balance, and an awareness of the creative power of our attitudes and emotions in shaping the condition of our physical body. Healthy living also means having positive, supportive, and loving relationships with other people. He also pointed out, that we need to understand that the various systems of the physical body - the nervous system, the circulatory system, the endocrine system, and the internal organs - are interconnected profoundly. A disorder in one system can cause problems in another; achieving balance and harmony in one system can benefit the others. We also have to remember that each of us is made up of a body, a mind, and a spirit that are interconnected. For healing to be total and lasting, we need to work on integrating all three aspects of ourselves.

In his readings Edgar Cayce pointed out that a succession of lifetimes makes it possible for the soul to move towards oneness with God while taking responsibility for its choices. Karma is more than debts to be paid; it is a matter of soul memory, even memory stored in the unconscious mind. We tend to repeat old patterns until our free will consciously decides to create new patterns of thinking, feeling and acting. It is not important to remember details of past lives but to focus on the challenges and opportunities in our current lifetime, employing reincarnation as a tool for understanding how and why everything happens for a reason. In addition, for each lifetime the soul comes into the material world it has a mission that includes work to help transform itself for the better as

well as work that transforms the world for the better. Finding and using the soul's talents through self-study is the key.

Cayce's approach to the soul and spirit demands that we take responsibility for our own lives. Often, the circumstances in which we find ourselves are of our own making, sometimes stretching to previous lives. Similar to Theosophy, Cayce's premise was that there are two sides to ourselves: The personality (familiar identity) and the individuality (the authentic self). Healthy living requires that we learn to forge a deeper connection to our individuality, and the process begins by paying attention to our purposes, intentions, and ideals. Two disciplines support this work: meditation (listening to the divine within) and self-analysis through dream interpretations. Soul development involves maturing into a certain way of being in life: present, patient, helpful, loving. It is learning how to put aside one's personality and wilfulness and instead waken to one's individuality and willingness to serve God.

In his readings Cayce also points to a new way of understanding Christ. He distinguishes between Jesus, the most recent incarnation of a soul who had many lifetimes on earth, and the universal Christ Consciousness, the awareness of the oneness of all life. Christ Consciousness resides in the unconscious mind of each soul, waiting to be awakened by free will.

The Essence of the Cayce Philosophy

1. ***Everything is connected – all is one:*** Once we perceive this unity it is our challenge to apply this understanding as practical mystics.
2. ***Life is purposeful:*** Each of us is born with a personal mission, a "*soul-purpose*". There is an aspect of service to soul-purpose.
3. ***Approach life as an adventure:*** Life is meant to be a playful search for the truth; it is research in the broadest sense of the word.
4. ***Be non-competitive: show compassion:*** Nothing takes us away quicker from the sense of oneness, and therefore from our own soul-purpose, than the drive for competitiveness. Compassion is the capacity to be present for another person and experience how we are all really the same. It is a matter of feeling with another person, not taking responsibility for that person but being responsible and responsive to that person.
5. ***Take responsibility for yourself:*** Help is available but no one else can fix things for us. Ultimately each soul is accountable for itself. The principle of self-responsibility is a cornerstone of Edgar Cayce recommendations.
6. ***Look ahead rather the back:*** The present and the future cannot be understood outside the context of the past but in essence he was saying to always look ahead and never back and understand that you are going to come back again. We should make choices that will help create the best possible results in the next lifetime.
7. ***Changing anything starts with an ideal:*** Motives, purposes, and ideals are the center of Cayce's psychology. If we want to change anything in life we have to start at the motivational level.
8. ***All time is one time:*** Sometimes we get hints about the deeper mysteries of time

(e.g. a precognitive dream). If we pay close attention to our inner lives, we might find clues that time is more complex than we think.

9. ***Success cannot be measured by material standards:*** Measuring success, especially in terms of one's soul, is elusive because we cannot use the same standards for measuring the internal and external life.
10. ***Courage is essential to any spiritual growth:*** High aspirations and ideals are not enough, we have to do something with them.
11. ***Evil is real and comes in many forms:***
    a) A lack of awareness – a deficit in conscious awareness;
    b) Extremism – we need to watch for our own tendency to go to extremes;
    c) Aggression and invasion – all human relations have the potential for these forms of evil;
    d) Transformation – stay engaged with anything ungodly and keep working to transform it;
    e) Rebellion and willfulness – we choose every day how to respond to evil; the focus is on our behavior – are we going against the impulse to bring the spirit into the material world.
12. ***Learn to stand up for yourself; learn to say no when it is needed:*** It is similar to self-assertion and setting boundaries.

Atlantis

Atlantis is a legendary tale that has provided one of the most intriguing and enduring mysteries of all time. Plato wrote the first known account of Atlantis ca. 355 BC in two of his later dialogues, Timaeus and Critias. The narrative involved actual historical figures and contained other accurate historical elements as well. Plato's story of Atlantis comes from the tradition of orally handing down an important story from one generation to the next.

Edgar Cayce and Atlantis

Speculations and debate on Plato's Atlantis started the moment he first related the tale and have never stopped. Beginning in the 1800s, however, a completely unique set of Atlantis ideas emerged and the most influential of these came from Theosophy. Blavatsky's Atlantis speculations are primarily described in *The Secret Doctrine*. Like Plato, Blavatsky wrote that civilizations are periodically destroyed by cataclysms that result in changes in the earth's surface, but she added that each new root race springs forth from the destruction. According to Blavatsky, the third root race was called Lemuria and it began some 18 million years ago in the Indian and Pacific Oceans and the major remains today are Australia, the islands of the Pacific, and portions of California. The development of the fourth root race – Atlantis – greatly overlapped with the Lemurians, and Blavatsky indicated that a major destruction of Lemuria occurred 4,25 million years ago.

How is the legend of Atlantis connected with the Edgar Cayce life readings? The 2,500 life readings in file were given for approximately 1,600 different people. About 700 of these people had incarnations in Atlantis that influenced their present lives. There was a coherent, non-contradictory series of events in those readings. According to Cayce many individual souls who had one or more

Above: Edgar Cayce on the couch used during his readings.

incarnations in Atlantis are reincarnating in this century, particularly in America. Along with technological abilities, they bring tendencies for being extremists. Often, they exhibit individual and group karma associated with selfishness and exploitation of others. Instead of a continent destroyed in a single day, as related by Plato, we get glimpses of men's activity in a land wrecked by at least three major upheavals at widely separated times.

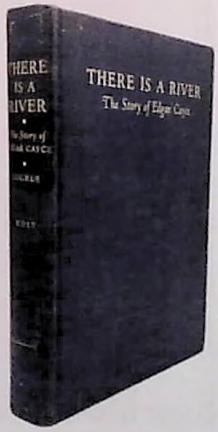
In the readings it is revealed that Atlantis, located in the area of the Atlantic Ocean stretching from Gibraltar to the Gulf of Mexico, was first occupied by an advanced race of humans in 210,000 B.C. By 50,000 B.C., the country had developed an advanced culture with strange technology. Cayce's Atlantis was a maritime culture throughout its entire existence, trading with nearly all of the other lands of the world. Plentiful natural resources existed on the temperate islands. Temples were constructed in the cities. One fascination with Cayce's Atlantis concerns a mysterious crystal, similar to a laser-like device, because it became the reason for the struggle between two factions, the peaceful spiritual group, Law of One, and the Sons of Belial, who worshipped self-aggrandizement, sought power over others, and practiced human sacrifice. Cayce's story of how the destructive forces were unleashed is entwined with the mysterious crystal.

There are numerous books out there about Edgar Cayce's readings pertaining to Atlantis, among them one book by his son Edgar Evans Cayce.

Death and Legacy

Edgar Cayce did not pay much attention to the rules of diet he so stringently recommended to others and he was also a chain-smoker. Throughout 1941 and 1942, readings repeatedly warned Cayce about his poor diet, high blood pressure, respiratory problems, and various lesions and other obstructions in his intestinal tract. The warnings came as no surprise to his wife Gertrude and his secretary Glady because of his high-fat diet, his smoking, and a lack of sleep. At time, the "*Source*" even appeared to be angry with Cayce's inability to better take care of himself. It was a tragic irony that Cayce didn't act on the advice given, probably due to the ever-increasing demands being placed on him after the publication of *There is a River* which brought many new members to A.R.E. in 1943. The deluge of publicity brought an estimated 4,500 requests for readings and a lot of dollars for the organization. He was over-extending himself until he was stopped by a stroke in August 1944. He gave his last reading on September 17, 1944 for himself. Everyone present was counseled to be at peace.

Recommendations were given for Cayce's



Above: The only biography written during Cayce's lifetime – Thomas Sugrue's *There is a River*, published in March 1943 – caused interest in Cayce to increase considerably.

physical comfort, but little else. He passed away on January 3, 1945. His wife Gertrude followed him on April 1, 1945.

Association for Research and Enlightenment (A.R.E.)

Although Cayce died in 1945, the timeliness of the material in the readings — with subjects like discovering your mission in life, developing your intuition, exploring ancient mysteries, and taking responsibility for your health — is evidenced by the hundreds of books that have been written on the various aspects of this work as well as the dozen or so titles focusing on Cayce's life itself.

Members of Edgar Cayce's Association for Research and Enlightenment (A.R.E.), the non-profit founded by Cayce in 1931 with the purpose of helping people to transform their lives for the better through ideas and information found in his psychic readings, have access to the entire set of 14,306 readings in a database residing online in the members-only section. The readings can also be found in their entirety in A.R.E.'s physical library, located at their headquarters campus in Virginia Beach, which is open to the public daily. Members also receive the quarterly Venture Inward magazine, a quarterly newsletter and have access to other material online.

Edgar Cayce's ARE
your body mind spirit resource since 1931

Above: The logo of the Association for Research and Enlightenment.

Biography by ***Margueritte Harmon Bro*** *(1894 – 1977), who was an American minister, missionary in China, and author of books.*

Additional resources

Association for Research and Enlightenment website – ***www.edgarcayce.org***

Bro, Harmon Hartzell. *Edgar Cayce: A Seer Out of Season*. St. Martin's Paperbacks, 1996. (One of the best biographies).

Cerminara, Gina. *Many Mansions: The Edgar Cayce Story on Reincarnation*. New York: Signet Books, 1950, 1990.

Horowitz, Mitch. *Mind as the Builder: The Positive-Mind Metaphysics of Edgar Cayce*. Virginia Beach, Virginia: A.R.E. Press, 2017.

Horowitz, Mitch. *Mind as the Builder*, presentation at A.R.E.

Johnson, K. Paul. *Edgar Cayce in Context: The Readings: Truth and Fiction*. Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 1998. (Suny Series in Western Esoteric Traditions).

Kirkpatrick, Sidney D. *An American Prophet*. New York: Riverhead Books, 2000.

Kittler, Glenn D. *Edgar Cayce on the Dead Sea Scrolls*. New York: Warner Books, 1970.

Puryear, Herbert B. *The Edgar Cayce Primer: Discovering The Path to Self-Transformation*, New York: Bantam Books, 1982.

Stearn, Jess. *The Sleeping Prophet*, New York: Bantam Books, 1967. (This was a best-selling book).

Sugrue, Thomas. *There Is a River*, Virginia Beach, Virginia: A.R.E. Press, 2003.

Todeschi, Kevin. *Edgar Cayce on the Akashic Records*. Virginia Beach, Virginia: A.R.E. Press, 1998.

Todeschi, Kevin and Henry Reed. *Contemporary Cayce: A Complete Exploration Using Today's Science and Philosophy*. Virginia Beach, Virginia: A.R.E. Press, 2014.

Photographs in this article used by permission of the Edgar Cayce Foundation, Virginia Beach, VA.

Theosophical Society in England

THERE IS NO RELIGION HIGHER THAN TRUTH

Online Bookshop

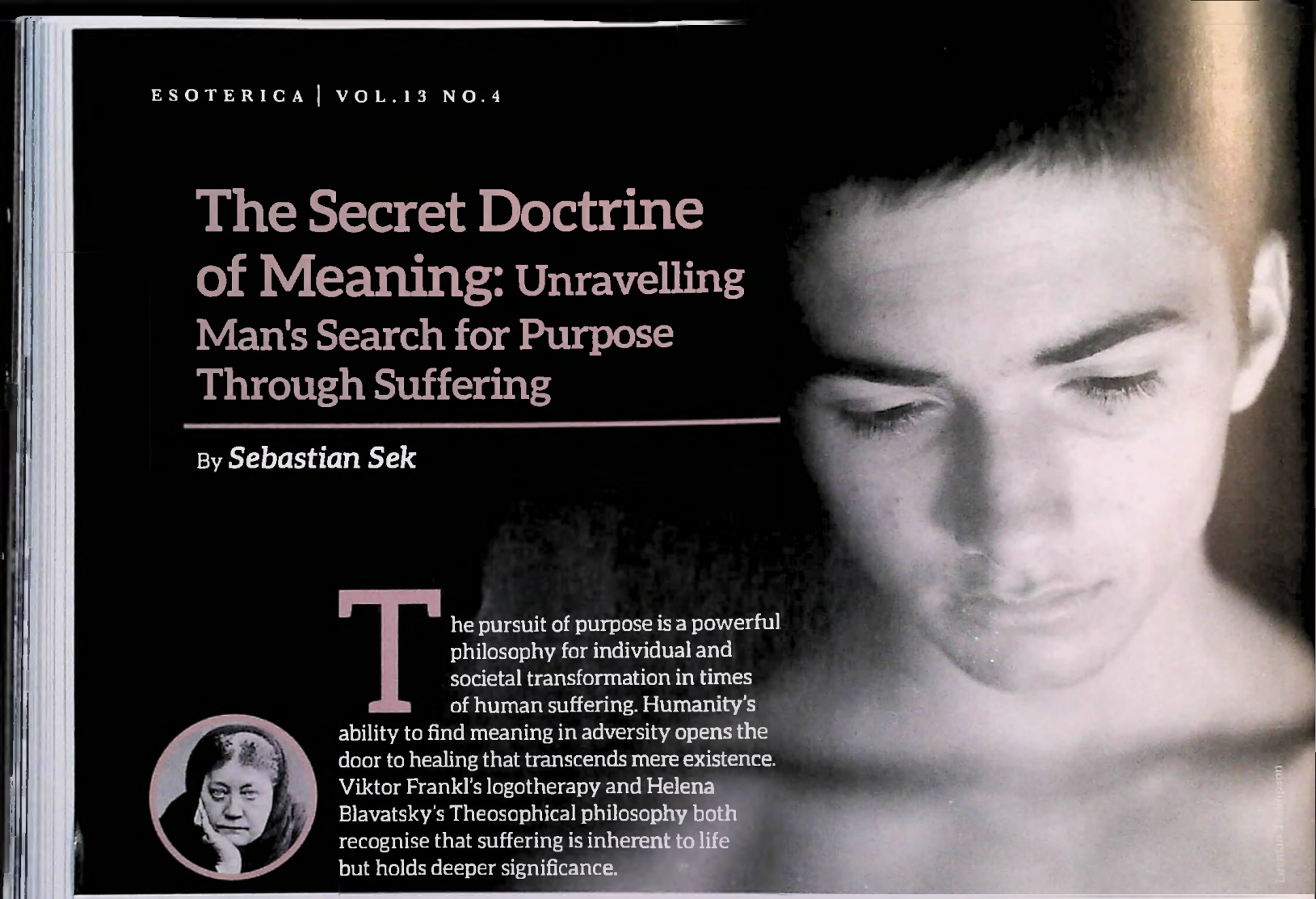
PLEASE NOTE: The Bookshop is now temporarily closed due to relocation. The Theosophical Society, however, remains open for general enquiries.

Please call 020 7563 9817 or visit www.theosoc.org.uk

THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY in ENGLAND & WALES

The Secret Doctrine of Meaning: Unravelling Man's Search for Purpose Through Suffering

By ***Sebastian Sek***



The pursuit of purpose is a powerful philosophy for individual and societal transformation in times of human suffering. Humanity's ability to find meaning in adversity opens the door to healing that transcends mere existence. Viktor Frankl's logotherapy and Helena Blavatsky's Theosophical philosophy both recognise that suffering is inherent to life but holds deeper significance.

Top: Helena P. Blavatsky (1831-1891); *above:* Viktor Frankl (1905-1997).

Blavatsky saw suffering as part of the karmic cycle, essentia for spiritual evolution across lifetimes while Frankl emphasised the transformative power of finding purpose in the darkest moments, turning suffering into victory (Frankl, 1984). Both perspectives highlight that suffering can lead to profound growth. By integrating Frankl's psychological wisdom with Blavatsky's esoteric view, meaning becomes the cornerstone of resilience and spiritual development. Viewing suffering through this lens helps cultivate empathy, strengthen collective responsibility, and accelerate human consciousness. It is not an easy path, but a necessary one for initiating a new age (Farby, Bulka, & Sahakian, 1995).

Frankl's logotherapy and Blavatsky's Theosophy offer distinct yet interconnected views on suffering's role in life. Frankl's logotherapy, tested under the horrendous conditions of concentration camps during World War II, emphasises the importance of

finding meaning in even the most challenging circumstances (Frankl, 1984). According to Frankl, the will to meaning is fundamental to human existence and can serve as a foundation during difficult times, encouraging suffering to be reframed as an opportunity for growth and insight (Frankl, 1973). In contrast, Blavatsky's Theosophical teachings regard suffering as essential component to the soul's evolutionary progress. She argues that suffering is not arbitrary but the inevitable consequence of the soul's actions across various life experiences, shaping it for spiritual development. Blavatsky introduces the concept of karmic lessons, portraying suffering as a vehicle for learning that moves the soul toward understanding and eventual union with God. Additionally, she touches on *"sacred suffering,"* where those undergoing spiritual awakening may experience pain not only for their own growth but as a service to the collective good, aligning with Theosophy's ideals of universal compassion and brotherhood. In Blavatsky's philosophy, the soul's journey across lifetimes culminates in union with the divine source.

According to her teachings, the soul emanates eternally from the divine essence, evolving through cycles of karma and rebirth. Healing, in this context, goes beyond physical or emotional; it represents the soul's gradual refinement through the lessons of each life. This cosmic perspective promotes not only individual healing but also humanity's advancement, as each soul contributes to the greater divine plan. While Viktor Frankl's concept of self-transcendence reveals that healing stems from finding meaning beyond immediate suffering, his perspective emphasises that true healing emerges when we uncover a purpose that surpasses individual hardships, allowing us to grow through adversity (Frankl, 1984). By dedicating ourselves to something greater than our temporary existence, we cultivate inner recovery and resilience against future challenges. In this sense, difficulties become transformative much like Blavatsky's view that hardship is part of the soul's journey and a means of spiritual purification. Suffering pushes the soul toward enlightenment, just as hardship fosters greater understanding.

While spiritual and psychological paths both aim to alleviate suffering, their philosophies differ in subtle yet important ways. Yet in their differences lies potential – by integrating these insights and recognising each person's inherent worth, a more holistic understanding of wellness may emerge. With open minds, suffering can be reframed and overcome, advancing collective healing (Farby, Bulka, & Sahakian, 1995). Each act of compassion ripples outward, affirming our shared humanity. Frankl's teachings on logotherapy and Blavatsky's esoteric perspectives offer profound insights into how the search for meaning nurtures resilience, both individually and collectively. Frankl identifies three primary paths to meaning: through creative work, loving relationships, and adopting a purposeful attitude toward hardship (Frankl,

Jackson Hendry

1970). By finding meaning in these areas, we can transform difficulties into opportunities for growth, making suffering more bearable and purposeful. He emphasises that each moment offers a chance to discover meaning, warning that neglecting these opportunities leads to an existential void (Frankl, 1984). However, Frankl acknowledges that logotherapy is not a comprehensive system for addressing all human problems. While the search for meaning is crucial, it does not guarantee well-being or eliminate suffering. Nevertheless, focusing on purpose can help people transcend painful circumstances and gain wisdom from life's challenges (Frankl, 1969).

While Blavatsky's teachings focus on the soul's spiritual journey, her perspectives resonate with Frankl's search for meaning as part of cosmic evolution, governed by karma and reincarnation. Every joy and struggle contributes to the soul's progress across lifetimes, not for individual fulfilment but as part of humanity's collective advancement. For Blavatsky, resilience arises when one aligns with nature's divine order, viewing hardships as essential aspects of the soul's pilgrimage toward enlightenment. Blavatsky stressed the importance of mental discipline in developing inner strength. She taught that by mastering the emotional and lower aspects of the self, one could connect with their higher spiritual nature – echoing Frankl's idea that our responses determine life's meaning (Frankl, 1973). She encouraged detachment from worldly concerns and a focus on the soul's infinite journey, fostering resilience by looking beyond temporary struggles to the soul's greater purpose. Cultivating this perspective allows one to face hardships with a sense of purpose and endurance. Both Viktor Frankl and Helena Blavatsky emphasised that building resilience through what gives life meaning involves dedication to personal and spiritual growth. Frankl emphasized the tension between "*what is*" and "*what ought to be*" as a catalyst for change (Frankl, 1984), while Blavatsky focused on the soul's journey through karma and dharma. For Blavatsky, true resilience comes from understanding that trials are part of the soul's karmic path toward purification and enlightenment. Through meditation, study, and selfless service, individuals can gain wisdom and rise above suffering, finding strength in the realisation that life's challenges are integral to spiritual evolution. Although Frankl and Blavatsky agreed that finding meaning is an ongoing quest shaped by life's hardships, their approaches differed. Frankl saw meaning as a balance between body, mind, and spirit, where challenges are met with wholeness and fortitude. For Blavatsky, aligning with natural order and conscious discipline allows one to face tribulations with grace. Both thinkers suggest that meaning is not merely found but forged through experience, though Blavatsky saw existence as a grand pilgrimage toward enlightenment, with resilience rooted in the belief that struggles refine and elevate the soul.

Andrew Slifkin

Helena Blavatsky's call for Universal

Brotherhood highlights the healing potential of deep human connection, guiding personal actions toward a higher spiritual purpose. She envisioned a world built on unity, harmony, and cooperation, transcending geopolitical, theological, and scientific boundaries. Politically, fostering a global awareness beyond national interests promotes international solidarity and respect. Religiously, Blavatsky advocated for a universal spiritual sensibility that transcends rigid doctrines, uniting individuals in their shared pursuit of truth. Scientifically, she urged the integration of empirical knowledge with spiritual understanding to bridge societal divides and create a civilization centered on meaningful relationships and shared purpose. Her philosophy emphasises recognising our common humanity and forming deep bonds that overcome superficial differences. Hence, Blavatsky's perspective mirrors Viktor Frankl's belief in the transformative power of purpose, particularly in times of adversity. Frankl argued that by committing to meaningful roles, we cultivate a sense of interconnectedness and resilience within our communities, which an aid in society's healing (Frankl, 1984). Both Blavatsky and Frankl emphasised that shared hardship, when viewed through the lens of purpose, can strengthen social bonds and propel civilisation toward greater enlightenment. Blavatsky also stressed the wise application of ideas to promote unity and restoration, reflecting Frankl's belief in the importance of responsibility in the search for meaning (Frankl, 1969). She believed that suffering deepens compassion, a concept Frankl explored through his work with Holocaust survivors, observing how even in the harshest conditions, the pursuit of meaning fosters perseverance and hope.

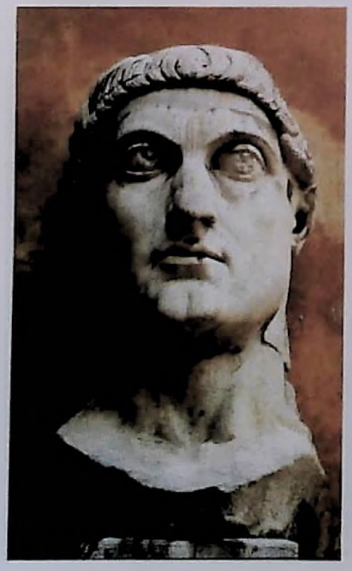
Sonia Dauer

While Frankl focused on tapping into the human spirit's search for significance, even in times of great duress, contributing to a fellowship based on accountability and solidarity, Blavatsky envisioned societal restoration as a communal process, where people recognise the interconnected destiny of all humanity. Frankl saw meaning emerging from fulfilling one's roles and responsibilities within supportive communities, whereas Blavatsky viewed wellness as part of a more extensive, interconnected cosmic order. By acknowledging our interconnectivity and aligning our actions with a higher spiritual purpose, we can navigate life's complexities and create ripple effects of care and compassion. Helena Blavatsky's understanding of evolution extends far beyond physical or biological change, delving into the spiritual betterment of humankind as a unified whole. Blavatsky envisioned humanity collectively traveling a path toward spiritual illumination, with each person contributing to an unfolding Divine Design aimed at harmonising spirit, soul, and matter. To her, the evolution of consciousness is a pilgrimage toward recognising our divine nature, achieved by overcoming base desires and cultivating inner wisdom. She emphasised our responsibility as stewards of this wisdom, playing a crucial role in advancing the spiritual

Last Words

Constantine's Impact on Early Christianity

Emperor Constantine the Great (272-337 CE) played a significant role in shaping early Christian celebrations, including Christmas. Although he did not invent Christmas, his actions and policies contributed to the development of the holiday as we know it today.



Merging Pagan Traditions

Constantine sought to unify his empire by blending Christian and pagan traditions. He merged elements from two prominent pagan winter festivals:

- **The Saturnalia** (December 17-23), honouring the Roman god of agriculture, Saturn.
- **The Natalis Solis Invicti** (December 25), celebrating the birth of Mithras, the Persian god of light.

Constantine incorporated these traditions into the Christian celebration of Jesus' birth, creating a new holiday. This blending of customs helped to establish Christmas as a widely accepted and festive occasion.

Edict of Milan (313 CE)

Constantine's Edict of Milan granted Christians freedom to practice their religion, effectively ending persecution. This edict also allowed for the construction of churches and the celebration of Christian holidays, including Christmas.

Council of Nicaea (325 CE)

Constantine convened the Council of Nicaea, a crucial gathering of Christian bishops that established the Nicene Creed and standardized the Christian calendar. Although Christmas was not explicitly addressed, the council's decisions laid the groundwork for the development of a unified Christian calendar, including the celebration of Jesus' birth. ✻

9 772753 503008

ESOTERICA

INSIGHTS INTO THE AGELESS WISDOM

Esoterica, the journal of the Theosophical Society in England and Wales,
is a magazine for the inquiring and the curious.
It is for those seeking spiritual answers to those big questions of life:

Who are we?
Where did we come from?
What's our purpose and destiny in life?

Its mission is to explore those timeless truths, occult knowledge and universal laws
which pre-date but underpin all philosophy, science and religion.
We offer thought-provoking and original interpretations
of these fascinating ideas from the perennial philosophy
to unlock the secrets of ourselves and the cosmos.

Above all, it's our intention to offer not just dry theory but, wherever possible,
practical solutions to the difficult issues which face every one of us.

The next edition will appear on the spring equinox,
20th March 2025.

Published by: The Theosophical Society, 50 Gloucester Place, London W1U 8EA www.theosoc.org.uk